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ABSTRACT

The Department of Communication and the English Language Institute at Wayne State University in Detroit are one year into an experimental project in intercultural communication instruction that brings international students and metro-Detroit undergraduates into a shared classroom. The Detroit project design was partly funded by the Ford Foundation through the Wayne State Diversity Project, and is of potential use to more than 150 colleges and universities nationwide with intensive ESL (English as a Second Language) programs. The Detroit Project's experience suggests that the curricular intents and requirements of classic undergraduate intercultural communication courses can mesh well with the administrative and curricular intents of programs designed to teach English to international visitors. Further, the global student mix permits simultaneous intercultural instruction at cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels in a manner much less possible in a standard undergraduate setting. This paper describes the administration, implementation, and curriculum of the course at Wayne State University, as well as its historical antecedents elsewhere, especially in the Intercultural Communication Workshop movement of the 1970s. Contains 2 notes and 11 references. Two newspaper articles concerning the course are appended. (Author/RS)

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ED 389 013

Inviting International Students into the Communication Classroom: The Wayne State University Global Communication Course

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A paper submitted to the 1995 Conference
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Abstract

The Department of Communication and the English Language Institute at Wayne State University in Detroit are now one year into an experimental project in intercultural communication instruction that brings international students and metro-Detroit undergraduates into a shared classroom.

The Detroit project design was partly funded by the Ford Foundation through the Wayne State University Diversity Project, and is of potential use to more than 150 colleges and universities nationwide with intensive ESL (English as a Second Language) programs. Our experience suggests that the curricular intents and requirements of classic undergraduate intercultural communication courses can mesh well with the administrative and curricular intents of programs designed to teach English to international visitors.

Further, the global student mix permits simultaneous intercultural instruction at cognitive, affective and behavioral levels in a manner much less possible in a standard undergraduate setting.

This paper describes the administration, implementation and curriculum of the course at Wayne State University, as well as its historical antecedents elsewhere, especially in the Intercultural Communication Workshop movement of the 1970s.

It's an interculturalist's dream, and it's possible on many campuses across the U.S. today: a class filled with Americans and students from around the world, joined twice weekly to explore theories and practice of intercultural communication. Concepts such as "individualism-collectivism," "proxemics," and "perceptual filters" come alive.

Teacher:	*"So what would this hand movement (delicate good-bye wave) mean in Korea?"*
Korean Student :	*"Come here, little dog."*
Teacher:	*And this? (a friendly 'come here' gesture directed to a Syrian student).*
Syrian Student:	*"I would say: Don't you ever point a finger at me like that. Anyone who would do that to me is insulting me. I wouldn't point my finger even at a child."*

America's need for increased undergraduate instruction in intercultural communication has never been more obvious. Yet, despite the proverbial shrinking of the globe, the powerfully changing demographic realities of our society and the growth of internationalized business, on the typical college campus, this need may go unmet.

Ironically, university campuses could readily provide young Americans with their first exposure to the international sphere. Most U.S. universities and colleges now attract significant numbers of foreign students. Recent figures indicate that close to 390,000 post-secondary international students (one-third of all students studying abroad) were enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs at institutions across the U.S.[1] The presence of these students on our campuses provides the potential for eye-opening intercultural contacts and exposure to a richness of cultural diversity.

But unfortunately, just because culturally diverse students share a campus does not mean they interact. On many campuses, often to the dismay of faculty, students from culturally parochial backgrounds quickly link socially with similar others. Even in these globally cosmopolitan contexts, American and international students generally live in separate societies, hardly brushing by each other on sidewalks.

This frustrating situation has long been noted on U.S. campuses, both by members of communication departments and by staffs of international student and student exchange programs. And yet the academic setting continues to offer a unique hope, in that many college campuses *do* have the resources to draw culturally diverse students together in creative, exploratory ways. At Wayne State University in Detroit, the Department of Communication and the English Language Institute are now one year into an experimental project in intercultural communication instruction that brings together recently-arrived international students and metro-Detroit undergraduates in one classroom. Partially funded by the Ford Foundation through the Wayne State University Diversity Project, the *Global Communication* project provides a model of potential use to more than 150 colleges and universities nationwide which house intensive ESL (English as a Second Language) programs.[1]

The idea for the *Global Communication* project at Wayne State grew out of informal discussions at the 1992 Workshop for the Development of Intercultural Coursework at Colleges and Universities at the East-West Center in Honolulu, and from the desire of both the Department of Communication and the English Language Institute at Wayne State University to foster a richer climate of intercultural communication on campus.

Despite the fact that Wayne State University enrolls over 2,000 international students and that metro-Detroit is anethnically diverse area, it was clear that American students on the Wayne State campus were, for the most part, typically oblivious to the cultural riches around them. In addition, the English Language Institute, which offers English-language training to approximately seventy-five college or university-bound internationals each semester, had long been concerned with the social and linguistic isolation of its students. An intercultural communication course that regularly brought American and international students into sustained contact with individuals from other cultures seemed to provide at least the beginnings of a solution to these problems.

Faculty from the two departments began to meet late in 1992, and the Global *Communication* course which grew from the collaboration serves dual academic functions: 1) training international and American students in theory and practice of intercultural communication; and, 2) helping international students improve their English proficiency and understanding of American culture. Twice weekly, the course brings approximately fifteen American undergraduates and fifteen advanced-level English Language Institute students together in the classroom. (In addition to attending the integrated class sessions, English Language Institute students meet as a separate group for four hours per week of instruction in and practice of English-language communication skills.) In the joint sessions, the curriculum strongly targets academic, attitudinal and behavioral learning.

SOME HISTORY OF THE INTERCULTURAL CLASSROOM MODEL

The concept of joining international and American students in intercultural communication workshops and classes has had many expresions over the years. A primary model was the movement that swept the nation in the 1970s, called Intercultural Communication Workshops (ICWs).

What characterized these workshops was their foreign/American student mix and their emphasis on experiential learning, with lectures serving to clarify concepts of communication and culture so as to stimulate discussion. Workshops patterned on the Regional Council for International Education design (Regional Council, 1971, p.61) aimed to provide participants with:

> ... (1) information about other societies and the people who live in them; (2) an understanding of how people from different cultures relate to and communicate with one another; and (3) an opportunity to become more conscious of the culturally determined aspects of their behavior and to experiment with ways of breaking through the barriers to communication which these create.

In contrast to the "human sensitivity training" also popular in that era, ICW workshops aimed not to *break down* or ignore barriers caused by cultural differences, but to *increase understanding and appreciation* of such differences (Benson, 1976).

Many of these weekend workshops, and subsequent term-long courses which evolved on some college campuses, grew out of the Pittsburgh Model for intercultural communications workshops designed in 1966 by the Regional Council for International Education (Benson 1976). The original target audience for the Pittsburgh Model ICW was international students; the workshop was conceived as a learning environment generating "communication skills needed for full effectiveness in the American environment" (Hoopes, 1973). But it was quickly discovered that participating American students greatly benefited, as well.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, ICW's spread across the nation's campuses, including to Cornell University, the State University of New York, the University of Cincinnati, the University of Washington, and the University of Oregon, among many others. By 1973, an estimated 7,500 U.S. students and 15,000 foreign students had attended a one-day, weekend or on-going ICW (NAFSA, 1973), and the University of Minnesota and University of Oregon offered an ICW as a regular part of its academic curriculum (Hoopes, 1973; Benson 1976).

In 1970, the Council began publishing Communique, a newsletter focusing on developments relevant to ICWs (NAFSA, 1973).

At the University of Oregon, the expansion of the ICW weekend into a term-long academic experience in 1974 allowed for the introduction of a text and a good deal more theoretical input, in addition to the experiential emphasis and practical skills taught by the course (Benson, 1976).

But during the 1980s, around the nation, the number of ICWs diminished, probably because of university budgetary pressures, although there is some evidence of increasing interest in the model, as demonstrated in recent years by

demand for ICW facilitator-training workshops at various conferences.[2] At least one ICW-type course survived through 1991 at Portland State University, offered two terms per year. At the 1991 convention of the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, Janet and Milton Bennett, directors of the International Communication Institute, proposed that universities reconsider the value of offering Intercultural Communication Workshops (Bennett & Bennett, 1991).

During the peak of the ICW movement, some attempts were made to measure the impact of the weekend workshops. Using a control group of American students in a "normal" intercultural communication course, Gudykunst (1977) created a four-item "cross-cultural interaction index" for path model analysis. His data showed no significant differences in "cross-cultural attitudes," but did chart a significant increase in subsequent cross-cultural friendships among participants in the workshop.

PEDAGOGY OF THE WSU GLOBAL COMMUNICATION COURSE

As a culture-general course, Global Communication explores categories of difference across all cultures, rather than focusing on the accumulation of knowledge about specific cultures. Our intent is to consider ways to navigate effectively in unfamiliar cultural settings. Since many of the students arrive in the class with no significant exposure to cultures other than their own, our broadest aim is to instill a foundation of cultural relativism, intercultural curiosity and communicative confidence.

The course curriculum is grounded in classical introductory intercultural communication theory, with readings and lectures on culture, communication, perception, values, gender, social organization, ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism, cultural taxonomies (e.g., collectivism/individualism, proxemics, Hofstede), worldviews and spirituality, cultural relativism, non-verbal and verbal expression, and international culture in the workplace. Thus, the theoretical content is common to introductory intercultural

communication courses (of the type that use textbooks like Samovar & Porter, 1991; Kloph, 1995; Gudykunst & Kim, 1992; or Brislin, 1993).

However, of equal importance with theory is the course's intentional targeting of students' feelings, attitudes and behaviors, often through group simulations, discussions and out-of-class experiences. In each topic area, we attempt contact with cognitive, affective and behavioral levels. A look at our sections combining "What is Culture?" with the touchy subject of stereotyping may help to illustrate how this is carried out.

Coming in the early weeks of the course -- and used explicitly as an opportunity to deepen candor and trust between the students -- the section was called *"Ourselves as Others See Us: Personal and Cultural Obstacles to Communication."* We began this section by showing excerpts from the video *Cold Water* , which strongly voices newly-arrived international students' experiences and feelings. Students in the film describe both how they viewed Americans and how they felt themselves viewed by Americans. Our Wayne State students came to the film having read materials dealing with stereotyping and prejudice, and were thus prepared on the cognitive level for the discussion.

Even so, American students in particular, found the film somewhat difficult on a personal level. Some Americans found the cumulative impact of the international students' views of them quite irritating, even insulting. On the other hand, although many international students in the class agreed with the views expressed in the film, many felt uneasy admitting this to the American students. Students were forced to come to terms with their feelings and to begin tentatively to communicate them in a way that was at the same time honest and tactful.

In order to deepen this experience, students were then given an assignment. They were to go home and record stereotypes prevalent in their own culture about every other nationality or ethnic group in the class. These were collected and printed out (for a subsequent class meeting) in the form of a matrix so that students could see, with a

horizontal glance, what their culture informally taught about other cultures, and what other cultures taught about them.

As a tool for cognitive/theoretical instruction, the matrix joined a lecture on stereotyping, ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism, and on the mechanics of prejudice and attribution. At an affective or attitudinal level, students were exposed to the patterns, variety and contradictions in prejudices held by various cultures around the world. African Americans, for instance, were held in high esteem by four Chinese students, who emphasized African American industriousness and bravery. European Americans had the chance to see how other groups in the world stereotyped them; and a student from India was somewhat startled to hear herself describe stereotypes she had been taught at home about Chinese that now looked quite silly in the context of our class. Learning to talk more openly with each other about the bigoted content in each of our cultures taught students skills in cultural self-monitoring and in avoiding the placement of blame or guilt on themselves or others for the historical context in which they were raised.

Though such in-class activities are effective in fostering communication among our students, some of our most important activities takes place outside the classroom. Three times per term, students take part in a "cross-cultural venture." Small groups, made up of students from different cultures, plan and participate in some type of outing. This may be a dinner at someone's home, a movie, bowling or a picnic -- any activity where students can share each other's cultures and get to know one another in a pleasant and relaxed setting. One outing is to a place of worship other than the student's own. The process of planning and carrying out this activity (which is in itself an exercise in intercultural communication) is left almost entirely to the student groups.

CHALLENGES TO INSTRUCTORS

The intercultural classroom poses fresh learning for instructors, as well. Managing a class composed of culturally diverse individuals who differ not only in their style of communication but also in their facility with English can help one reconsider an established teaching style. As instructors, we needed to listen far more attentively to verbal and non-verbal communication by students. We needed to speak slowly and simply enough to communicate with everyone in the room, and yet with enough subtlety, content and enthusiasm to satisfy native English speaking undergraduates.

The dynamics of guiding class discussion also differ from the standard undergraduate setting. It proves difficult for many American students to restrain themselves sufficiently during class discussions to allow less fluent and more reticent international students to share equally in the conversation. Within a few weeks, Americans were consistently frustrated at the lack of contributions by their interesting visitors, and many international students were embarrassed by their relatively limited ability to comprehend spoken English and to express themselves orally.

At the point each term when that mutual frustration becomes palpable, we hold a "How are We Doing?" feedback session on the class. We asked students to consider, in large brainstorming session, "What are we growing, thus far, in this experiment in International exchange? Are we growing what we want to harvest? Is there anything we should try to refine in our classroom process?" As in the case of the stereotype matrix, students were forced to deal with issues in a direct and personal way. The exercise also gave the teachers insight into students' needs and frustrations and how these might be dealt with. Thus, far from being a typical end-of-course evaluation, our self study turns out to be both a personal exploration and a practical exercise in communication. The resolutions that emerged from the discussion gave students personal goals for improving their own intercultural communication behaviors.

During subsequent weeks, we tried to create settings in which students could experience alternative communication norms. We needed to help American students hold silence, and help Asian students step forward. One successful strategy -- which soon became a favorite of the students -- was use of an Iroquois "talking stick." (We just used a kaleidoscope.) In a large-group discussion, the stick is given to one person. From that moment on, the person holding the stick is the only person allowed to talk; and the presence of the stick in the circle of students asks all participants to focus all of their listening on the speaker. When the speaker is finished she passes the stick to someone else, either to someone whom she wishes to hear or to a person who indicates a desire to speak. If a person receiving the stick does not wish to speak, he may simply pass the stick to someone else. The passing of the stick continues until everyone who wishes to has spoken. We did not attempt to control every discussion in this way. However, used judiciously, the device encouraged many of the communicative behaviors that we were trying to teach.

Instructors also must remain aware of the diverse expectations for the teacher-student relationship in various cultures. In many, if not most, cultures, teachers are authority figures and dispensers of knowledge. Consequently, some international students may feel uncomfortable when confronted with the relatively casual teaching style of most American teachers and the relaxed atmosphere in most American classrooms. We found it best to make some self-conscious and subtle adjustments, such as respecting a student's reticence to speak and restraining of personal candor or flamboyance in instruction -- particularly at the beginning of the term when no one is on solid ground.

Essentially, then, in teaching Global *Communication*, we treated our role more as that of a facilitator rather than that of instructor. A facilitator's job is to guide students through experience to a knowledge that they ultimately discover by themselves. This process, tricky enough when the group is homogeneous and the subject neutral, becomes exceptionally delicate when the group is diverse and the subject is one's own heritage and

way of being. Perhaps one of the most significant challenges for the teacher is to help students negotiate the rocky places along the way.

In a more practical vein, teachers must also take into account varying levels of English proficiency when choosing suitable texts for the course and deciding how to present material in lectures. Since, as was mentioned above, the international students also meet with the English Language Institute instructor for an additional four hours per week, we decided to make virtually no concessions to their lower level of English proficiency. Although they often struggled, both with the reading materials and with lecture comprehension, with the extra help that they got from the ELI instructor, they were able to succeed in the course.

In addition to these classroom concerns, the administration of the course between two university departments also requires some maneuvering. The international-student component of the class is made up students studying in the highest level of the English Language Institute's intensive program. At present, these students do not receive any credit for the course. Thus, the course must be "filled" by American undergraduates, for whom the course is credit-bearing. The course must also be scheduled to coincide with the schedule of English Language Institute classes. Both departments are working on making the course credit-bearing for the international students and on fine-tuning the coordination of our courses. A second intercultural communication course, *Cultures in Communication*, which is similarly organized, will be offered during the coming academic year.

All in all, we have found our experiment in intercultural communication to be highly successful. We judge this to be so from the comments we have received from students at the end of the term. We also judge this to be so on the basis of the genuine communication that we have seen taking place among these students of such diverse cultural backgrounds. For many of our students, the course seems to be a very personal and meaningful experience that they will carry with them for some time to come.

As one student said on an evaluation:"This class was an eye opener for me. If I have an opportunity to be in another setting like this I'm going to take advantage of it. Thanks!"

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Notes:

1. A listing of ESL programs nationwide, compiled with much other useful information, is available in the annually published: English Language and Orientation Programs in the United States. DeAngelis, Carl and Battle, Ed (Eds.). Institute of INternational Education. 809 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017-3580.

2. This information comes from a March 1995 conversation with Janet Bennett, Director of the International Communication Institute, in Portland.

New class breaks down cultural barriers

Eric Smith/The South End

■ Yu Roy Fung and Jennifer Kowalski find how close they can comfortably talk for their cultures.

By Robert Myers
THE SOUTH END

What often goes unsaid on campus is all that's talked about in one Wayne State classroom.

"Global Communication," a class formed by the English Language Institute and the Communications department, deliberately puts international students and American students together to help them learn about each other.

The class explores the roots of cultural differences and attempts to break them down.

"The smartest way to teach it is to have a multicultural class," said professor Ruth Seymour of the Journalism Institute for Minorities. Seymour is one of the course's instructors.

She said the purpose of the class to chip away at cultural friction and fear through education and exposure.

"The subject of why people don't like each other is the driving force behind the class," she said.

Sharon Messinger of the English Language Institute (ELI) is the course's other instructor. The ELI helps international students learn and polish their english.

"I think (the course) fits in very well with the university's plan to become multi-cultural," Messinger said.

Messinger and Seymour discussed some of the ideas behind teaching global communication. The subject of a recent class session was how body language and non-verbal communication differ from one group to another. They found that many things people take for granted, such as how close to stand to someone when talking, or the hand gesture for "crazy," differ surprisingly amongst cultures.

"I don't want to use the words forced to communicate, but that's (the purpose of) the class. To communicate," said Jennifer Kowalski, an American student in the course.

The class has been on several field trips, including a Turkish dinner hosted by Mehmet Barut, a student in the course. Students have also been bowling, on a visit to a mosque, and on other various trips. During one picnic, Russian student Boris Knysh played the guitar and sang Russian songs.

"It was very interesting, and very fulfilling for me to (see) him off campus," said Kowalski, explaining that seeing him outside an academic setting made him appear more human, despite stereotypes.

Knysh said he didn't know Cold War hostility was direct-

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Culture:
Students get a better view

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[illegible] at the Russian people by Americans.

"Governments are enemies, not people," he said.

The course reveals, however, that beliefs about Americans, [illegible] seems that Americans believe others should be like them.

"Americans don't have respect for any culture," said Knysh, during one class session.

The students laughed.

Most in the class said it should be a required course for the whole university. But Shira Drissman, a Jewish member of the class, dissented, saying backlash from forced interaction could have the opposite effect.

"You can't force somebody to meet somebody if they just

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Students think globally

BY ANDREA WIELGAT
Contributing Writer

They come from different cultures, including Asian, Middle Eastern, Indian and American, but these students all have one thing in common — they want to learn how to communicate with each other.

Two new classes at Wayne State are teaching them how to do just that.

Global Communication and Cultures in Communication teach intercultural communication skills by matching 15 American and 15 foreign students from Wayne State's English Language Institute (ELI).

In Global Communications, students "learn by doing."

They share their personal experiences, participate in small and large group discussions and interact with fellow students. One of the highlights of the class is the cross-cultural activities, where the students attend outside activities with each other.

Places the students visit include the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Cranbrook laser light show. They also attend different religious ceremonies in order to better understand religions that vary from their own.

"It's a very good chance for ELI students to communicate with American students," said Xioling Lu, 18, a student from Sichuan, China.

She feels the class benefits the ELI students because they practice speaking and listening to English in a regular academic setting.

American student Sheryl Collier agrees.

"It was really neat to experience our own cultural stuff with people who don't know about it," she said.

Cultures in Communication takes a different approach than Global Communications. Instead of studying culture in general terms, students study five cultures in-depth. These cultures include Chinese, Arabic, North American, Mexican and sub-Saharan Africa.

The class will try to be as specific as possible by using separate books and insight on how to communicate in each culture. They will also invite representatives from the individual cultures into the classroom, so students will have the opportunity to practice what they have learned.

In both classes, students share their experiences so others can learn from their mistakes or successes. In Global Communication, students also interview a student from another culture about family in their country.

"I just felt I really connected with (my student)," Collier said. "I felt really good after the interview."

Global Communication will be offered for the second time next semester. Cultures in Communications was developed this year with a Wayne State diversity grant from the Ford Foundation.

"The diversity project is to create diversity in the classroom . . . or will somehow foster diversity on campus and teaching and in the classroom," said Sharon Messinger, ELI instructor and team teacher with lecturer Ruth Seymour.

She said both groups of students benefit from the class. The ELI students get plenty of practice listening, speaking, reading and writing English, and the American students get an awareness of culture in a unique setting.

"The Americans are able to meet consistently with people from diverse cultures and really see what they are like," Messinger said.

Both classes are worth three credits towards any major in the Department of Communication. The courses are also counted as electives in the co-major in Peace and Conflict Studies and can be used as general electives towards most WSU undergraduate degrees.

The classes can be taken as a sequence or students can choose to take only one class. The two classes will be presented by Messinger and Seymour in April at the 1995 Central States Communication Association conference in Indiana, where they will be part of a panel discussion on Communication Education.

"I think this is an opportunity for students to really see diversity, to experience (it) first hand, and I know of no other class that offers

Please See "Global" Page 4

Brandy Baker/The South End

■ The English Language Institute unites American and international students.

Global: *Diversity is the key to class*

From page 3

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